Final Report

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Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project: Charting the 1990's and Beyond

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Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project

Abstract: Community Discussion Guides

The first six phases of the Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project included a discussion paper, two major conferences and a number of public consultations, all with the goal of reaching consensus on the kind of future that is desirable in rural Saskatchewan. The process and outcomes of the first six phases all contributed to the development of the project's Community Discussion Guides.

The Discussion Guides are not intended to serve as authorities on the topics with which they deal. Rather, they provide concerned citizens with the opportunity to gain insight into the deliberations of others who, like themselves, are concerned about the future of rural Saskatchewan.

The first in the series of guides, *Acting on Our Visions: A Positive Approach to Development in the Community*, provides communities with a framework for identifying their visions for the future and planning for action toward their goals.

Having determined their priorities with the first guide, communities can then turn to the other discussion guides that are most appropriate to them. Topics covered in the guides include:

- Arts Culture and Recreation
- Community-based Enterprises
- Education Services
- Farm Finance
- Health Services
- Human and Social Services
- Local Small Business
- Local Job Creation
- Environmental Protection
- Rural Church
- Saskatchewan Products
- Tourism
- Volunteers and Volunteer Organizations

Each guide reports the exploration of project participants in that particular area of concern. The manuals are structured to help communities use those explorations to further clarify their own goals and future actions.

The series also includes on guide that looks at the nature of innovation and its role in community development. Like the guide *Acting on Our Vision: A Positive Approach to Development in the Community*, this guide, entitled *Searching for A Future: Employing an Entrepreneurial Approach to Community Development*, is more global in nature and can be applied to any community, regardless of its specific concerns.

The Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project was administered by the Saskatchewan Committee on Rural Area Development (SCRAD) and was financially supported by a number of provincial and federal organizations and agencies, including the Agriculture Development Fund.

Executive Summary

The Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project was planned through the work of a task force of the Saskatchewan Committee on Rural Area Development (SCRAD). The Project had three primary objectives:

- To achieve among rural leaders and people, agreed-upon, preferred vision(s) for the future of rural Saskatchewan.
- To plan and encourage the implementation of a strategic action plan and related reference materials directed at attaining the vision(s) for the rural Saskatchewan of the future.
- To market new concepts, relating to development, diversification and sustainability, required to bring rural and small town Saskatchewan in tune with a global economy.

The project had seven phases, implemented as follows:

Phase 1: The Challenge Paper

Key provincial and local leaders were asked to contribute their views on the kind of farm and small urban community towards which we should work in the 1990s and beyond. A survey was distributed to sixty leaders, forty-nine of which replied. The respondents contributed their ideas in relation to several topics: income generation, consumer resources, core services, special interest needs, settlement patterns and quality of life.

The Challenge Paper provided a kick start to discussion in Phase 2 of the Project.

Phase 2: The Vision Conference

The theme of the conference, held in December of 1989, was "A Time to Choose: Redefining Our Vision". The conference was devoted to providing the 247 participants with the opportunity to think about the kind of future they would like for themselves and their communities.

Speakers addressed a wide variety of topics, all of them aimed at helping participants to identify current issues and clarify their visions for the future. In addition to the speakers, those attending the conference participated in workshops. These workshops were aimed at getting participants to focus on specific areas of concern. The outcomes of the conference were summarized in "vision statements", both for rural Saskatchewan in general and for each of the sixteen workshop topics.

Phase 3: The Public Dialogue

This phase was designed to expand the opportunity for public participation in the project. The vision statements developed at the Vision Conference were used as a reference document through which broader reaction and input could be sought. This was done through several means.

First, in February, 1990, a province-wide satellite (narrowcast) program was delivered via the thirty-five Saskatchewan Communications Network sites. This event involved 203 people.

Second, a discussion guide and questionnaire were sent to all Social Studies classes in rural secondary schools in Saskatchewan. 453 students submitted their responses.

Third, a wide variety of organizations and individuals were also sent the discussion guide and questionnaire. Organizations were asked to incorporate discussions into their regular or special meetings. Individuals were encouraged to respond with their personal views. Some individuals formed "kitchen table groups" to work through the discussion guide and questionnaire. Responses representing 170 individuals were received.

Phase 4: The Action Conference

The theme of the conference was "A Time to Act: Creating Our Future". This phase was devoted to developing action plans that might be used to work toward the identified visions for rural Saskatchewan.

In addition to a number of speakers, the conference participants used workshop sessions to refine the vision statements they had developed in December, to a large extent based on the input from Phase 3, and to work on action plans to move toward those visions.

Phase 5: The Public Action Plan

This phase, during the summer of 1990, provided a period of consolidation and documentation for the project and a break from public participation. In addition, considerable time was spent preparing for the final public participation phase.

Phase 6: Communication and Implementation of the Vision/Action Plan

One-day regional conferences were held at each of six centres: Watrous, Yorkton, North Battleford, Melfort, Swift Current and Weyburn. Each of these regional conferences was largely devoted to developing and discussing action options for rural Saskatchewan and to discussing the application of the action options in the local communities.

Phase 7: Product Preparation and Marketing

This was the documentation phase, which includes the primary print and video products of the project. These include:

- The general report on the project
- A Community Discussion Guide Series, based on the workshop topics of the two conferences
- A half-hour video

It is assumed that the most important product of the Project is the learning that took place among the participants, as they expanded their knowledge and

understanding of the opportunities and limitations of development in rural and small urban Saskatchewan, and as they changed their attitudes towards local self-help and control, the role of government in development and other related matters.

The Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project was administered by the Saskatchewan Committee on Rural Area Development (SCRAD) and was financially supported by a number of provincial and federal organizations and agencies, including the Agriculture Development Fund.

Saskatchewan Committee on Rural Area Development

General Report on The Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project:

Creating Our Own Future: Saskatchewan in the '90s and Beyond

Contents

Introduction: Our Future or Theirs page 3

The Saskatchewan Committee on Rural Area Development page 4

Acknowledgements page 5

The Use of the Report page 6

The Project page 7

- Phase 1: The Challenge Paper page 7
- Phase 2: The Vision Conference page 9
- Phase 3: The Public Dialogue page 10
- Phase 4: The Action Conference page 12
- Phase 5: The Public Action Plan page 13
- Phase 6: The Communication and Implementation of the Vision/Action Plan page 13
- Phase 7: Product Preparation and Marketing page 14

Appendix 1: The Project Participants page 15

Appendix 2: Phase1; The Challenge Paper page 16

Appendix 3: Phase 2; The Vision Conference page 30

Appendix 4: Phases 2-4; Vision Statements on Major Areas of Concern page 32

Appendix 5: Phase 4; The Action Conference page 42

Appendix 6: Phases 4-6; Planning Action page 47

Appendix 7: Phase 7; The Community Discussion Guides page 57

Appendix 8: The Rural Futures Task Force page 58

INTRODUCTION – THE FUTURE: OURS OR THEIRS

The Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project was inspired by the wishes and hopes of the Saskatchewan Committee on Rural Area Development (SCRAD) to contribute, as a multi-organizational group, to the future well-being of rural Saskatchewan. The project was experimental in many ways. However, it was a sincere attempt to help those who were interested and available to participate and express their informed opinions on how they feel rural and small town Saskatchewan might best be revitalized and further developed.

It became clear during the various phases of the project that people held a strong view that they wanted to control their own destiny. They wanted to be involved in those organizations, agencies and institutions that they had established in their communities and province. They did not want to be separated from policies and programs, information and education, or the leaders who might perceive themselves as having complete freedom to act on their behalf.

They saw clearly that there were crucial problems and issues. Control on some matters seemed, and perhaps were, beyond their influence and control. International markets and prices seemed to represent the core of these concerns. But there was a conviction that neither Regina nor Ottawa were in this category. Nor were the actions of large-scale organizations, commercial or voluntary, to be accepted as a given, where those actions created negative impacts on local communities.

There were some difficulties experienced in the project where individuals were overwhelmed or carried a single focus on today's economic and social problems. They tended to prefer that the project focus all its energies on solutions to those problems. But on the whole, participants saw the benefit of looking largely to the future, and struggling with those actions that would help us get there. This was the mandate of the Project.

Even as the Project concludes, the question remains: What were the long-term benefits of the Rural Futures Project to Saskatchewan? The answer depends, we think, on two factors. First, will the momentum, in terms of the commitment and dedication of the Project's participants, carry into the next few years in organizations and communities? Second, will that dedication and commitment lead to a continuing local process of discussion and planning, hopefully supported by the products of the Rural Futures Project, such as this general report, the community discussion guide series, and the video module?

John Derbowka, Chairperson,
Saskatchewan Committee on
Rural Area Development

December, 1991

THE SASKATCHEWAN COMMITTEE ON RURAL AREA DEVELOPMENT (SCRAD)

The Saskatchewan Committee on Rural Area Development or SCRAD was initiated at the request of participants at a provincial conference on rural issues held in Saskatoon in February, 1979.

SCRAD's role is to provide rural organizations, agency field staff and community leaders with information and education relating to rural development in Saskatchewan. This is done through educational, developmental and study projects, through development of networking and sharing opportunities and, to a limited extent, through consultation with rural communities.

At SCRAD's establishment, a number of provincial organizations with an interest in rural Saskatchewan joined. These included sponsoring members and supporting members. Sponsoring members are province-wide organizations with a local constituency and an interest in the future well-being of rural and small urban Saskatchewan. Supporting members are publicly-funded educational institutions and government organizations. All member organizations appoint a representative and an alternate to the committee.

Current sponsoring members include:

- Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association
- Saskatchewan School Trustees Association
- Saskatchewan Wheat Pool
- Federated Co-operatives Limited
- Saskatchewan Women's Institutes
- Credit Union Central of Saskatchewan
- National Farmers Union (Saskatchewan Region)
- Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.

Supporting members include:

- Government of Canada through the Western Diversification Office
- Government of Saskatchewan through Saskatchewan Rural Development and Saskatchewan Community Services,
- The University of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Regional Colleges.
- The Extension Division, University of Saskatchewan, provides a secretariat and programming services to the Committee.

Each Member Organization of SCRAD commits to provide representation to the Committee and funds to permit nominees to attend the four or five meetings held each year. All funds for educational programs and studies are sought as they are required. As a result, SCRAD's resource base has been limited over the years. Despite these limitations, the committee consistently has been in the forefront of change in rural development theory and practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project Sponsors and Supporters

The Saskatchewan Committee on Rural Area Development (SCRAD) wishes to acknowledge, with appreciation, financial support from the following major sponsoring organizations:

- Future Corporation
- Industrial Adjustment Service, Canada Employment and Immigration Commission
- Agricultural Development Fund, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

SCRAD also wishes to acknowledge other financial supporters, including contributions from several of its own Member Organizations:

- Credit Union Central of Saskatchewan
- Federated Co-operatives Limited
- Imperial Oil Limited
- Saskatchewan Wheat Pool
- The Co-operators Insurance/Financial Services
- University of Saskatchewan

SCRAD acknowledges the contribution of the following groups and individuals:

- All the Saskatchewan citizens, community, organization and agency leaders, who devoted their time to the Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project.
- The many individuals who made presentations and acted as resource persons to the Project.
- The Resource Teams and other individuals who contributed to the preparation of the Project's "Community Discussion Guide" series.
- The Saskatchewan Communication Network and the Division of Audio Visual Services for their preparation of the Project video.
- Dr. Brett Fairbairn for his documentation and writing contributions to the Project.
- Margret Asmuss for her administrative, writing and editing contributions to the Project.
- Sandy Cey, Secretary to the SCRAD Secretariat, for her continuing and untiring efforts in the heavy burden of office duties and word processing in carrying out the Project.

THE USE OF THE REPORT

This report is designed to provide both information on two distinct topics for organizational and/or local community application.

THE FUTURE OF RURAL SASKATCHEWAN: The report provides a cafeteria of images and ideas about the future of rural and small town Saskatchewan. These images and ideas were deemed to be important to the future well-being of rural Saskatchewan by those who participated in the project during the 1988-90 period.

VISION/ACTION PLANNING PROCESS: The report provides insight into one model for a public education and planning project. That model has generally been referred to as the 'vision/action' model. How this process may be applied at the local level is outlined in the Community Discussion Guide "Acting On Our Visions: A Positive Approach to Development in the Community."

In addition, the report provides two avenues for planning and community education. These are:

A Plan for the Future: During the project itself, as described herein, the people of the province were given an open invitation to participate in the Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project. At a variety of times and location over the period of approximately one year, rural and small town citizens and representatives of agencies with interest in rural Saskatchewan participated in the project. Following the process of the project through its various phases, will give the reader insight on how the project produced information useful as a guide for the future. In this sense, the report presents a plan for the future.

A Process for Your Use: The findings of the project are structured so that the ideas assembled from the Rural Futures Project participants may be used as a springboard for collecting input from particular publics or constituencies. Please note the survey format of the section entitled "Appendix 5: The Actions to Attain the Vision". Using this survey, the information collected during the process may be used at any level — provincial, region, community or organization.

Together with the series of topical discussion guides that are provided from the project, we encourage you to use this report as a reference and discussion guide in one or more of the following contexts:

- as personal study or reference;
- in the regular or annual meetings or conferences of your organization;
- as the basis of special planning or benchmark meetings in your organization or community;
- as a tool to be used in discussing collaboration with other organizations or mutual planning and project interests with neighbouring communities.

THE PROJECT

The Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project was planned through the work of a SCRAD Task Force (a working group) established initially out of concern for the financial stress being experienced by farm and small town residents. Of prime concern was the availability of credit to rural enterprises, including farming and small business.

The Task Force met over a period of approximately six months, and gradually reached the conclusion that the matters of financial stress, credit to rural enterprise, and related money matters, were too narrow a focus. The emerging rural issues appeared to be both deeper and broader than those topics represented. Thus the Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project developed, with a particular concern for broad public participation, together with ample time for the project participants to receive and study information and reflect on it. The proposed project was recommended to SCRAD for implementation, and was accepted.

The project had three primary objectives:

- To achieve, among rural leaders and people, agreed-upon, preferred vision(s) for the rural Saskatchewan of the future.
- To prepare, and encourage the implementation of, a strategic action plan and related reference materials directed at attaining the vision for the rural Saskatchewan of the future.
- To market new concepts relating to development, diversification and sustainability required to help bring rural and small town Saskatchewan in tune with a global economy.

The project had seven phases, implemented as follows:

Phase 1: The Challenge Paper

This phase was designed as the starting point for the overall project. It assumed that the individuals which people tend to view as key provincial leaders have already about the future of rural and small town Saskatchewan.

The selection of national and provincial leaders to contribute to this phase proceeded through two stages.

First, in July, 1989, sixteen leaders, primarily presidents of national and provincial organizations, were asked to provide the names and addresses of up to ten individuals they felt might be most appropriate to survey. This provided an expanded second list of leaders. From this process, a list of approximately thirty leaders were selected to be surveyed. Matters of sectorial interest,

gender, and geographic location were taken into account. Priority was given to those leaders who were mentioned most often.

Second, local community leaders who had previously been selected from throughout the province to participate in a SCRAD leadership training program, the "Saskatchewan Advanced Community Leadership Institute" (SACLI), were added to the national/provincial leader group. This provided a total of sixty leaders to whom the "Challenge Paper" survey was distributed by mail in September, 1989.

Key questions: **Towards what kind of farm and small urban community should we be working? What is your ideal vision for the future of rural Saskatchewan?**

The leaders were asked to briefly outline some of their key thoughts on the kind of "farm and small urban community" towards which we should work in the 1990s and beyond in relation to several topics. The topics included:

- Income generation (how people will create jobs and earn a living);
- Consumer resources (such as retail, financial, legal and other);
- Core services (such as health, education, transportation, human and other services);
- Special interest needs (such as recreational, cultural, churches, libraries, museums, voluntary organizations and other related needs;
- The settlement pattern (housing, distribution of households, hamlets, villages, towns and smaller cities to meet the future needs of rural citizens);
- The quality of life factors (those things important to making rural Saskatchewan a good place to live as well as work);
- Other elements of their vision for the future of rural Saskatchewan not outlined in the preceding headings.

For each of the topics (e.g. income generation or consumer resources), leaders were asked to identify what they thought were the key issues/challenges, and what they would like to see in that area of concern in the rural Saskatchewan of the future.

The responses gathered were compiled in a document – the "Challenge Paper" – which provided a kick start to discussion in Phase 2 of the project .

A copy of the "Challenge Paper" can be found in "Appendix 1"

Phase 2: The Vision Conference

The theme of the conference was "A Time to Choose: Redefining Our Vision." Accordingly, the conference was devoted to providing conference participants with the opportunity to think about the kind of future they would like for themselves and their communities.

> Key Questions: **What are the characteristics of rural Saskatchewan today? What do we value most? What do we want to preserve? achieve? attain? avoid? What challenges and opportunities do we face? Considering all the internal and external factors affecting our communities, what are our preferred futures? What are the choices for our community? for the province?**

At the opening afternoon session several resource persons assisted with the process: a visioning exercise lead by Prof. Barbara Lane, University of Saskatchewan; a session on understanding the effects of our values and attitudes lead by Ken Svenson, a Regina-based consultant; the highlights of the "Challenge Paper" (Phase 1), presented by Dr. Brett Fairbairn, University of Saskatchewan;, and an after dinner presentation on "Saskatchewan in Its Global Setting" by Drs. Ken Rosaasen and Isabel Anderson, University of Saskatchewan.

The next day started with a panel presentation on the current situation in Saskatchewan in relation to income generation, core services, consumer goods and services, and special interest needs. Two feature addresses were given by Rita Hlady, Educational Futurist, Saskatoon Board of Education, on "Creating the Future" and "Designing a Vision."

A large part of the second day was invested in a series of workshops on the following topics:

- strategies for local job creation
- developing and marketing Saskatchewan products
- starting and operating local business
- entrepreneurial innovation
- sustainable agriculture
- financing small business
- financing and re-financing farms
- financing community-based enterprises
- provision of goods and services
- education services
- health services
- human and social services
- working with volunteers and volunteer organizations
- sustaining the rural church
- developing tourism
- culture, arts and recreation facilities and opportunities
- sustaining a healthy rural environment

Workshops initially planned on the provision of legal services, transportation of goods and transportation of people, were cancelled due to the apparent lack of interest in the topics.

Each of the workshops was "lead" by a resource team of three members: One administration or policy specialist, one researcher or educator, and one community leader. One member of each resource team was selected to act as the "resource team coordinator." The role of the resource team was to, first, give leadership to the workshop group on their topic, and second, initiate the writing of a community discussion guide on their workshop topic.

On the last morning of the conference, Dr. Brett Fairbairn presented a brief vision statement summarizing the views of the conference participants on their visions for the future of rural Saskatchewan.

The conference closed with an address entitled "Towards the Future: Understanding Our Personality Differences" by Dr. Eldon Morey, a professional psychologist from Minnesota.

A copy of Dr. Fairbairn's presentation can be found in "Appendix 2".

Phase 3: The Public Dialogue

This phase was designed to expand the opportunity for public participation in the project, and to use the vision statement from the vision conference as a reference document through which broader reaction and input could be sought.

> Key questions (similar to those asked through Phase 2): **What are your questions on the Rural Futures Project and on the visioning process as it is being used in the project? What are your preferred futures for rural Saskatchewan? What are your preferred futures for the workshop theme topics?**

Various publics were encouraged to participate in this phase through several means.

A Province-wide Satellite (Narrowcast) Program

This program was delivered through the thirty-three Saskatchewan Communication Network (SCN) sites on the evening of February 22, 1990. The program was publicized widely in the province through the Regional Colleges, Rural Service Centres, through posters placed in communities by SACLI members, and through SCRAD member organizations. Several organizations sent out letters to all their local constituencies. For example, Federated Co-operatives Limited mailed a letter of request and the survey form to 178 retail co-operatives in the province.

The agenda for the evening included the following elements:

- A ten minute video from the Vision conference presented the concept of visioning.
- The group at each site was given the opportunity to ask questions of clarification on the project and the vision/action process.
- A summary of the findings of the vision conference was provided.
- Groups at each site discussed their preferred futures for rural Saskatchewan, and for the workshop theme topics (see Vision Conference) of their choice.
- In the late evening, feedback was received from approximately half of the sites in the province, and a four person panel responded to any questions presented.
- The groups at each site were encouraged to report their findings in writing through their local discussion facilitator to the project office at the University of Saskatchewan. This enable their perspectives to be included in the findings of the project.

Survey of Senior Secondary School Students

Through the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, a SCRAD Member Organization, a discussion guide and questionnaire was forwarded to all Social Studies teachers in rural secondary schools in the province. Students were asked to describe their preferred future for rural Saskatchewan and to comment on how Saskatchewan citizens, organizations and communities might most effectively contribute to the attainment of their vision(s).

Survey of Organizations and Individuals

A wide variety of organizations and individuals, including all Member Organizations of SCRAD, were encouraged to participate in this phase. Organizations were asked to incorporate discussions into the regular or special meetings of organizations to which they belong. Individuals were encouraged to respond with their personal views.

The findings of this phase were incorporated into the vision statement from Phase 2 and also fed into Phase 4, the Action Conference.

The revised vision statement can be found in "Appendix 4".

Phase 4: The Action Conference

The theme of the conference was "A Time to Act: Creating Our Future." This phase was devoted to developing an action plan that might be used to work toward a better future for rural Saskatchewan. The action plan would help rural people attain their vision.

> Key Questions: **At this point in time, what gaps are there in the vision statement? What additions would improve it? What short term objectives would help attain your group's vision. What factors will enhance and inhibit the attainment of your group's objectives? What resources (human, financial, physical) can be activated to achieve your objectives? What action plan would help attain our general vision involving the overall development of rural Saskatchewan?**

The conference commenced with a brief review of the findings of the vision conference held in December,1989, as a reminder to those who had attended and as an orientation for those involved in the project for the first time.

Discussion at the conference was concentrated in the workshop groups, corresponding to the workshop themes in the December, 1989 "Vision Conference." Again, workshops were lead by the resource teams. A brief period was spent finalizing the vision statements for each of the workshop areas, allowing the remainder of the conference to focus on action plans. There was an attempt by participants to create a general action plan and a plan specific to each workshop theme.

Presentations to the conference included a "Success Panel" in which four people from Saskatchewan outlined the steps to their success in an enterprise or a development program; talks by Dr. J. David Deshler, Professor of Education, Cornell University on "Designing a Strategic Action Plan" and "The Challenges in Planning for the Future"; a presentation on "Development in the 1990s: Lessons from the Experiences of Indigenous People" by Mr. Kenneth Thomas, Saskatchewan Indian Agriculture Program Inc.; and another on "Government's Role in Locally-Based Development: A Time to Act" by Mr. Allan Jacques, Director General, Saskatchewan Region, Employment and Immigration Canada. It also included a "Back to Coffee Row" panel to help conference participants prepare a report on their experience at the conference to take back home.

Phase 5: The Public Action Plan

This phase, during the summer of 1990, provided a period of consolidation and documentation for the project and a break from public involvement. A meeting of the Resource Team Members helped to plan for the documentation of the workshop themes into "community discussion guides." Feedback was provided to all participants in the project on its progress through an issue of the SCRAD newsletter, SCRAD UPDATE.

> Key Questions: **Is the project still on target? What have we learned to date? Where are the strengths and weaknesses in the project to date? How can the weaknesses be strengthened in the remaining phases of the project?**

In addition, considerable time was spent preparing for the final public participation phase, Phase 6.

Phase 6: The Communication and Implementation of the Vision/Action Plan

This phase was initially envisaged as a second satellite broadcast by which the findings of the Rural Futures Project to that date (fall, 1990) would be fed back to the project participants and to the general public. However, two factors lead to a modification of that plan. First, an acceptable time for the rural public could not be obtained on the SCN system. Second, people had found it difficult to articulate actions that would lead to their visions. They tended to articulate objectives and goals rather than actions. Therefore, the Task Force felt that further opportunity was needed for people to discuss the action plans in a face-to-face format.

> Key Questions: **What is your reaction to the general vision statement for rural Saskatchewan and to the vision statements for each workshop theme topic? Which specific action would you take to implement a rural renewal program for your community or all of the communities in you region acting together? What are your best ideas about specific actions to attain the general vision statements and the vision expressed on the workshop theme topics?**

One-day regional conferences were held at each of six centres: Watrous, Yorkton, North Battleford, Melfort, Swift Current, and Weyburn. Information was provided to the participants through three presentations: a video from the "Discovering the Future Series" by Joel Barker, entitled "The Power of Vision"; a presentation by Ray Boys, Development Consultant, Regina, who spoke on the topic "The Community Development Action Plan and How to Talk Somebody into Doing It!" and a video called "Ellendale — A Self Renewing Community" from Minnesota's state-wide "Project Future."

The remainder of the day was devoted largely to developing and discussing action options for rural Saskatchewan, and to discussing the application of the action options in local communities.

These action options are categorized in "Appendix 5".

Phase 7: Product Preparation and Marketing

This represents the documentation phase, which includes the primary print and video products of the project:

- The general report on the project — this document.
- The community discussion guide series, focussing on the workshop theme topics (or key areas of concern).
- The preparation of a half hour video in collaboration with the Saskatchewan Communication Network(SCN) and the Division of Audio Visual Services (DAVS), University of Saskatchewan.

It is assumed that perhaps the most important product of the Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project is the learning that took place among the project participants, as they expanded their knowledge and understanding of the opportunities and limitations of development in rural and small urban Saskatchewan, and as their attitudes toward such matters as local self-help and control, the role of government in development, and others may have changed.

Appendix 1
The Project Participants

Participation in the Project varied from phase to phase, with a majority of the it taking place in the early phases. Listed below are the direct participation figures, which does not include indirect participation, including cases where participants with direct involvement were encouraged to discuss the issues with their organizations, community groups or "kitchen table" groups.

Phase 1: The Challenge Paper

– Leaders requested to send in names of other leaders	16
– Leaders requested to complete the questionnaire	33

Phase 2: The Vision Conference

– Community and agency leaders	247

Phase 3: The Public Dialogue

– Community and agency leaders	203
– Secondary schooi students	453
– Individuals associated with organizations	170

Phase 4: The Action Conference

– Community and agency leaders	197

Phase 5: The Public Action Plan

– No public participation involved in this phase

Phase 6: The Vision/Action Plan Communication/Implementation

– Watrous	36	
– Yorkton	30	
– North Battleford	47	
– Melfort	37	
– Swift Current	60	
– Weyburn	32	
		242

Phase 7: Product Preparation and Marketing

– No public participation involved in this phase

TOTAL DIRECT PARTICIPATION	**1,561**

Appendix 2
Phase 1: The Challenge Paper

Visions and Choices: A Challenge Paper for Rural Saskatchewan

Statement Summarized for SCRAD by Dr. Brett Fairbairn,
University of Saskatchewan

Our community is 90% agriculture and agriculture in our area is not healthy. Many of the people I've talked to are frustrated and see no future in agriculture. All they are concerned with is surviving, which in most cases means they are withdrawing from community involvement... Until such time as agriculture is again healthy I believe the future vision of rural Saskatchewan is bleak.

The biggest challenge ... is to break the stranglehold agriculture has to our province. In no way do I mean it should be ignored as it will always be the strength of our great province, but we should put some greater emphasis on other areas.... Income generation must be based on sustainable development of natural resources and development of suitable secondary manufacturing.... Development of entrepreneurial skills of rural residents must be a leading theme of rural development.

I envision a future in which rural communities and towns can depend on their local health facilities when there are emergencies, when women want to give birth, when residents are in crisis and need social workers or mental health experts, and in which seniors are able to receive long-term health care. I also believe that education should be accessible to rural residents who want to upgrade their skills or embark on new careers – education which is practical, affordable and accessible. Women have the right to work outside of the home and have the right to decent salaries as productive members of our society. Those who choose to work outside of the home should have access to high-quality day care. We all have the right to a safe environment and we all have the responsibility to begin working towards it. I envision a future in which all people can participate in environmental conservation through recycling, reduced energy use and alternative programs.

In September and October of 1989, the Saskatchewan Committee on Rural Area Development distributed a survey to selected leaders in provincial organizations and local communities in Saskatchewan. The three quotations above are from three of the responses to that survey, and represent some of the visions and choices which rural people in Saskatchewan see today. This paper is based on the responses to SCRAD's survey. It is an attempt to show some of the ideas and concerns that are surfacing in rural Saskatchewan – and to challenge you, the participants in SCRAD's conference "A Time to Choose: Redefining Our Vision," to state your ideas and to make choices. SCRAD's

survey had seven parts, and after some general observations this paper will take you through each part in turn to indicate what some Saskatchewan community leaders had to say about different aspects of the future of rural Saskatchewan. Their comments indicate a mixture of fear and hope, many more new and innovative ideas than one would suppose, but less consensus and less existing co-operation than one would hope for.

General Observations: The Interrelatedness of Things

> *We say we are at fault for lack of development ... we have to do something dynamic and new and original. Then everything should be better. That is childish. Saskatchewan has historically been unique in its inventiveness... [Our industry] is gone because of money. The suppression of real industrial growth for the most part was built inherently into the system at Confederation.*
>
> *I find it hard to dream as I have observed the ownership of primary resource industries gradually slip from the hands of the producer into the hands of large corporations. This happened in Canada first in forestry, then in fishing, and now it is the turn of agriculture. The new form of ownership will produce at less direct cost but the indirect costs ... have appeared and are not ... cheap.*

According to one of the above quotations, the problem in rural Saskatchewan is the inevitable transfer of control into more and more concentrated forms. According to the other, the problem is the economic system imposed at Confederation. Another respondent says Saskatchewan's problem is the global economy, the only solution being "a world-wide economic system that would allow countries that need the grain to buy." These are all fair comments. What all of them have in common is the generalization of rural Saskatchewan's problems to fit into a global picture or theory. It is important to have a theory about what is happening to rural Saskatchewan. Theories explain what is problematic and reconcile us to things we have difficulty understanding. But it is a characteristic of a good theory that it unites people, suggests what needs to be done, and inspires us to do it. We in Saskatchewan need the kinds of ideas that will inspire people to positive action, not hand-wringing or negativism.

Agriculture in Saskatchewan is in both a short-term crisis, of which we are only too well aware, but also a long-term crisis that has continued since the early post-World War Two era. Real prices of wheat, for example, have been tending downward decade after decade, regardless of temporary market fluctuations and government policy changes. When good times come, perhaps we tend to forget this downward trend, and every time we over-build or over-buy we only set ourselves up for the next crash. We tend to forget that rural depopulation, increasing farm size, and our whole litany of complaints, began no later than the 1950s. They certainly did not begin in the 1980s.

One of the first and foremost questions we must answer is whether agriculture is and will remain the be-all and end-all of rural Saskatchewan. Our respondents were on both sides of this question, and there is no consensus.

"The key issue is cheap food as a policy and the main challenge is to change that policy," wrote one of SCRAD's respondents. This person made no other response to any of the first six sections of the seven-section questionnaire – ending the cheap food policy would solve the problems of rural income, business, core services, voluntary and recreational services, depopulation, and quality of life. Another insisted in the same vein that the income generation problem came down to the "ability of the farmer to make a living farming!" The solution to income problems (wrote a third) – "that is an easy one to envision – farmers would be compensated for the costs of feeding the nation. Governments will be brave enough to take action, whether it be through subsidies or other means, to change the current cheap food policy."

Typically, those of SCRAD's respondents who took this view did not believe anything but direct aid to agriculture would make any difference. "It is a pipe dream to think we can replace farm families by industrializing our small towns," wrote one. "The importance of agriculture and agriculture-based business must be recognized as basic and necessary. The concept of diversification, though attractive, detracts from the real need to support the industry of agriculture," wrote another. Still another insisted that the answer to improved community services was "More bloody farmers. Farmers make small towns viable, towns make communities viable.... Farmers keep other people in place. If the farmer goes so do they. It is in the vested interest of everyone to keep farmers in place – support rather than resent the dollar cost to keep them there." (One might characterize this as a "trickle-up" theory of economic development: send all aid directly to the farmer, and all else will follow.) Finally, one other respondent used even stronger language, writing, "The whole approach to the rural area crisis is [deleted] backward. You can't compensate for agricultural failure with anything else. Get agriculture back in the population's priority and you have the people and money to work with."

A slight majority of respondents, however, talked not about supporting agriculture but about changing it, about new crops and products, diversification of the family farm, more small businesses and small manufacturing in rural communities; about part-time and off-farm employment, and encouraging the kind of people who now live in cities to think about living in towns. Which is it to be?

It is a characteristic of society's greatest challenges that a whole set of problems – economic, social, cultural, political – are interrelated. SCRAD's respondents seemed to appreciate this, but it is difficult to deal with. One of them noted, for example, that the solution for better consumer services was that "we must increase our rural population so the retail sector has enough people to draw from to make their business feasible." But when it came to discussing depopulation, the same respondent said that "creating employment for our young people will solve this problem." In other words, we need more people to have better services, but we need better services to have more people.

This is not a paradox. It is the normal situation where social change is concerned. The changes that gain momentum in our society are the ones that are self-reinforcing; if they are changes for the worse we may call them vicious circles. One response to such complexes of problems is to generalize them and

simplify them to one huge cause. We have seen Saskatchewan's difficulties attributed to big corporations, big governments, world ecology, international grain markets, or Confederation. While there may be some truth to some of these, when we abstract problems and put them in such vast contexts, we make ourselves almost powerless. We must find ways to put challenges into contexts that allow people to take action in their own lives.

There is another side to the interrelatedness of social problems and social changes. The problems may be everywhere and interlinked, but by the same token so are the solutions. You can start wherever you like; you can begin to break the vicious circle at any point. What helps one aspect will tend to help the rest – improved cultural and recreation facilities, for example, might help attract young professional families, who would provide better-quality core services, and these might attract new business to the community. Every aspect of rural development is important. If we can define a vision that encompasses all aspects of rural life, then it is possible for the solutions to become as self-reinforcing as the problems have been. Solutions acquire momentum, too.

With that in mind, let us consider the survey responses dealing with various aspects of Saskatchewan's rural challenge.

Income Generation

Small towns need to become "retrained" to think in terms of industries other than agriculture. This means resources need to be made available for the towns to aggressively market themselves as alternative locations for business and for residence. This would mean that many towns would have to redefine their services and priorities – which would also require training.

> *[We need] business activity based upon specialized products and services which are unique to an area, take advantage of local resources, or fill a specialized niche in the market....*
>
> *The more rural areas can produce for their own purposes, development, and consumption, and the less they must rely on outside markets, investments and organizational forms, the better. Stated another way, the more a rural area can form its own, unique enterprises ... the more internally cohesive will that area be. That will also make that area attractive for tourism and outside business as it will be able to offer something different, something designed by residents themselves which will set it apart from areas more engulfed in the homogenized North American market.*

With respect to measures to help agriculture, many respondents mentioned the need for more diversified agriculture, by which they meant not just traditional mixed farming but fish, fruits, sheep, high-value seeds, specialty bagged products, and other "off-beat enterprises." SCRAD's respondents also favoured by a clear majority some action to stabilize farm income. Many favoured some kind of income insurance scheme; among these one clarified that this should "not be commodity based," another added it would be "without ... the previous

mistakes and rip-offs," and another referred to "some form of income stabilization not dependent on government and political whim."

To judge by the survey responses, community leaders are divided on one important new question: off-farm employment for farm families. In roughly equal measures, respondents saw this as either part of the problem or part of the solution. As one of them put it, "we must measure the value we place on our agricultural base.... If we do value it, then let us adjust domestic prices, import-export policies, stabilization programs and other income supports to make it possible for all farmers to have a meaningful life on the farm. Part of what is necessary to maintain rural population is a base of employment outside of farming . Let us not confuse this need with the forcing of farming couples into the work force just to support their farming enterprise. This does not create [a healthy agriculture industry.]"

But others thought the phenomenon of part-time farmers/part-time employees is a positive one that will keep people on the land, and serve as part of a general diversification and repopulation strategy. One of these respondents called for "a farm population which is not dependent on traditional crops for income but derives a portion of income from non-traditional farm and off-farm activities." Another put it that "the farmer must work twelve months of the year" (the respondent meant both wives and husbands) in order to generate the income that their families and rural communities need. One argued that we need more opportunities for part-time work in the service sector and agriculture-related businesses "to allow for off-farm income to support family farms." Still others favoured more "cottage industries" located on farms.

This way of looking at part-time work by farmers clearly means the farm is not seen as a self-sufficient, independent enterprise, but as one business in an interconnected web of rural businesses. The most important idea for many was that of developing small rural businesses and small rural manufacturing industries. We need "more small community enterprise, operated individually or co-operatively," wrote one respondent. "Have small industries in rural areas," agreed another. "We do not need large industries." "Too much 'big' money is going into corporate projects and not enough support for small industry that could go into small communities," said a third. Some of these advocates of decentralized and small-scale industry looked to the government to put policies in place to encourage it, such as the respondent who wrote that we need "small industries supported by the government in small communities."

Many stressed the need for inter-community co-operation. Economic development, according to these community leaders, should be conducted on a trading-area basis and not town by town. There should be integrated and complementary development, like secondary industries based on local primary ones, or industries in one town complementing others in nearby towns – not piecemeal development, one business in one town at a time.

Perhaps the final word on this section should be left to the respondent who wrote, "each community may have to find its own path to survival based on small industries, tourism, and a variety of methods of diversifying the economic base."

Consumer Resources (retail, financial, legal, etc.)

Instead of competing against each other for services, communities should work together to assure necessary resources are available to the trading area as a whole. There should be convenience services in every community. More specialized services should be available within 50 to 80 kilometres.

> *My vision for income generation in rural Saskatchewan is that individual people, groups, and business people co-operate to assist each other in every way. Individuals must adopt the slogan "shop locally." To support the small towns, business people must provide the necessary goods and services to keep the people satisfied when they do shop locally.*
>
> *My vision of a more ideal future in this area is that I assess the needs and make necessary adjustments to "make do" with what's available. In some cases it's just not financially practical for small towns and a small rural community to support these community services.*

There are two problems in the area of consumer services, wrote one respondent to SCRAD's survey: "boardroom" decisions that lead to services relocating in larger centres, and "declining patronage in small communities."

One response suggested by a number of people was to adapt to these trends. "The ideal of a 'self-sufficient small community' may not be possible in the future," suggested one person. The key then should be to have resources and services available within a reasonable distance. Electronic catalogue shopping was touted by several as a possible solution.

Many saw the need for communities to help shape these trends in a planned and controlled way, by sharing and consolidating services. We need "a recognition that competition locally may only hasten decline," argued one person, and there must be "acceptance of branch or subsidiary activities" of enterprises and services based in other, nearby communities. Others agreed that there should be innovative and flexible solutions like branch offices and stores; only certain communities should be identified to have a core of full "one-stop shopping" consumer services. A number said they would be satisfied with "outpost activities" by professionals of a few days of service per week, or "satellite offices" for lawyers, optometrists, dentists, and so on. One person called for better developed resource directories to help rural people access such services. Another emphasized that "instead of competing against each other for services, communities should work together to assure necessary resources are available to the trading area as a whole."

A few respondents commented on the size of the trading area that rural people should have in mind. There should be convenience services in every centre, said one respondent, and specialized services within a 50-80 kilometre radius. Others agreed that communities should worry about "providing a reasonable level of services to rural residents within a 50 kilometre driving distance."

Some suggest start-up grants for businesses and decent wages for employees, with subsidies to employers who can't afford good wages. "Have the government subsidize small businesses just as it does farmers so they can

operate in rural Saskatchewan," suggested another. A third suggested that groups of local businesses could combine for large-volume purchasing.

All of these are ways of planning, adapting, and managing present trends. A few responses suggested ways of going a little further. If the problems (as the quotation above suggested) are "boardroom decisions" and "declining rural patronage," then rural people may have part of the solution in their own hands: take more control of local business and economic development, and patronize local businesses more loyally. "Educate people to stay at home and support their own communities," suggested one respondent, and others echoed this sentiment. As for local control, another wrote that "co-ops and credit unions will be important. If only single services are left, hopefully it will be these." (Presumably they are less offensive as monopolies because they are locally controlled by customers, who may also be more loyal to them.)

The themes of local control on a district or regional basis, and of the need to change attitudes and behaviour – to "educate" – may be the two most important ideas that SCRAD's respondents raised with respect to services. They open up the possibility that local communities might be able to take positive action, if they are united and motivated for change.

Core Services (health, education, transportation, etc.)

Basic services (especially health and education) should be given top priority and my vision of an ideal future is that these services must be maintained at an acceptable standard. Other core services could be worked on and shared with other [communities] as best as possible.

> *Stop regionalizing services... Do not have bigger districts for things such as Home Care because you are getting away from community based measures. Bigger does not necessarily mean better. All bigger means is more impersonal.*
>
> *Further consolidation in health care services is required. The reality is that consumers demand the best possible health care and will travel to major urban centres to obtain it.*

Rural communities, complained one respondent, are "second class citizens" in services. "Health care is severely inadequate ... almost to the point of discouraging people from living in rural areas." Another noted that "every citizen [should] receive the same level of care and has the right for the same quality of education." Still another called for "parity in social, health, educational and cultural services between citizens of major urban communities and the rest of the province." "People want (as they go through life) the best of everything they can get. My vision is that nothing has to be sacrificed just because a person chooses to live in a rural area ... the 'quality of life' should be comparable." Still another agreed that "the two thirds of our population that live outside of the two main centres should not have vastly inferior core services, opportunities for [fulfillment of] special interest needs and other quality of life factors."

These comments, tinged in a few cases with apparent resentment of the services available in the cities, do not suggest how such "parity" can be achieved. Another respondent noted that there are "just not enough people to make these units viable. Rural people [are the] biggest offenders – they demand city services and will travel to get them." Perhaps one of the reasons Saskatoon and Regina hospitals are expanded so massively is not out of favouritism to city people but rather because these hospitals are packed with country people who insist on coming to the most elaborate care centres in the province. Is the solution, again, one of attitude, a solution in the hands of rural people themselves?

Core services are important to communities, many respondents insisted, and there are compelling reasons why communities cling to them. When smaller communities lose their school, noted one person, "they lose one of the main focal points in the community." "Communities require a focal point such as schools, church, and post office services. If these are maintained the population will be more stable." "How can we attract young families into our communities to maintain our school population? The key is availability of services." "To have core services we need people."

Given these various considerations, rural leaders seem somewhat divided on whether there should be much more consolidation and regionalization of services. Probably a majority agreed with one who proposed a "hierarchical system" for health and education, with community clinics in each community, hospitals in most towns, specialized services in cities or large towns "in every part of the province." There should be "co-operation between communities in sharing services," said another. Others proposed a regional concept – as one of them put it, "a hospital will be located in one community, a school in another."

Many commented on the importance of professionals to communities. The quality and consistency of some core services depends in large part on the willingness of professional people to locate in rural Saskatchewan, and communities depend on them in other ways as well. "Doctors, teachers, bankers, ag reps become the front line people here, but few have rural background or knowledge." A shortage of doctors was commented upon, for example, by a number of respondents, and they did not seem to think the problem was a financial one. We need programs to ensure that young professionals (doctors, lawyers etc.) "see rural practice as a legitimate alternative to urban amenities." Another wrote that we should "ensure that health care specialists and teachers view rural life as worthwhile – not strictly in financial terms." "Educate professionals to empathize with rural life so that they think rural."

Another insisted "we need to be more innovative and flexible when we look at services to the smaller rural communities," suggesting mobile dental, eye, and minor health units. A couple of people suggested teams of health care professionals serving groups of local hospitals.

Because of the need for specialized services to be concentrated in larger centres, ambulance service was singled out as particularly important by others.

Social services for seniors, the mentally ill, and the physically abused were called "inadequate or non-existent," and several respondents criticized child care possibilities as "inadequate and at best inconsistent." Particularly important to many respondents was seniors housing to keep people in their communities, and especially centres to combine the full range of levels of care so that people can move in while still independent, and remain in the same location when they require higher levels of care.

Our respondents had few helpful comments about transportation. A few demanded cheaper and more accessible transportation There must surely be a concern here for those who want to increase the numbers of seniors, of mentally ill or handicapped people, who live and stay in rural communities, or who want to reduce the isolation of farm families or improve access to child care and crisis support. Perhaps the most telling comment, however, was by one person who wrote simply, "thank god I drive!"

Special Interest Needs (recreational, cultural, church, voluntary organizations)

> *I don't feel this is a major problem now; any community that really needs a hall, church or rink can accomplish this challenge.*
>
> *This area is one of the most critical areas that requires the most organization. I feel provincial governments must have well-qualified people available for coordinating and organizing small towns so they can have recreational, cultural and other related needs properly accessible for everyone.*

Some respondents indicated that special interest needs were the least of rural Saskatchewan's problems and were adequately provided for. Those who answered this way seemed to have physical recreation in mind, and they stressed the need to maintain the status quo. "Keep all recreational facilities open in small communities," urged one of them. "As we know, in the summer all recreational activities such as swimming pools and golf courses are the busiest places in communities. In winter, the curling and skating rinks are busy. They not only provide recreation but are also a place for socialization."

While those who expressed satisfaction with special interest services seemed to have sports and recreation in mind, those who were dissatisfied thought there were too many such facilities; or they had voluntary organizations in mind, overworked and burnt out; or they bemoaned the emphasis on sports at the expense of cultural, spiritual, and artistic needs. The ideal future, wrote one respondent, will be "when artistic events are looked upon with the same enthusiasm as sports events."

The state of voluntary organizations in rural Saskatchewan was a concern to many. They emphasized the shortage of people and the need for increased services to deal with farm stress, farm women's issues, senior citizens and home care. Many saw these demanding voluntary activities as alternatives to government core services; more than one complained that public functions

were being "delegated from the province to local associations," and the implication seemed to be that local people were being asked to do too much.

Several respondents noted that the biggest problem with volunteerism was that the growing number of two-income families left fewer people in the community with the time for volunteer work. Voluntary activities seem to be more and more dependent on fewer and fewer leaders, and local groups need help to do their planning and need to co-operate with neighboring communities. As one of them put it, there are "too many organizations in all little towns – not enough people to go around." The result is burn-out. If everyone didn't have "two or three jobs to maintain their farms" then "these people would again have time to be the volunteers for local projects and organizations."

A particular concern was the "involvement of younger people in voluntary roles."

Some doubted that rural residents to solve these problems by themselves. "The recreational, cultural, etc. needs of rural residents should not be reliant only on the resources of the few scattered residents. Systems of government grants must make it possible for their need to be provided for even though the numbers are not there." Another agreed: "rural residents should not be penalized because they don't have concentrations of people." Another noted that there should be "provision of special interest services ... where they are economically feasible and not as a result of lobbying efforts of minority interests."

Others proposed regional and provincial coordinating bodies, and several suggested there was a need for paid community coordinators to organize volunteer work so that fewer people would suffer from burn-out. "I feel provincial governments must have well qualified people available for coordinating and organizing small towns so they can have recreational, cultural and other related [services] properly accessible for everyone."

While many expressed pride in their community facilities and determination to maintain everything they have despite rising costs, others complained about "too many recreational buildings in towns," duplication of facilities within 15-20 kilometres of each other, and "too many organizations in one town or area."

Again, the solution favoured by many of the rural leaders was consolidation, but under local control and on a co-operative basis. "Communities should co-operate with each other instead of competing with each other," wrote one person. There should be "concerted joint efforts of several towns," said another. Others claimed we should regionalize voluntary, recreational, and cultural activities – don't try to have everything in every town, but concentrate on "one strong activity" and leave the rest to nearby towns. As with consumer and core services, many were in favour of some kind of inter-community co-operation such as a "curling rink in one town, skating in another."

Local history projects and educational activities were singled out by one respondent as a good way to get people involved in their communities and developing a sense of loyalty and belonging. Another asked for "recognition of the need to preserve our local heritage which is so quickly disappearing." Areas like these may be ways to restore confidence, pride, and a sense of vitality and identity to rural communities.

The Settlement Pattern

> *[It is] time to accept that population patterns are evolving, from many small communities to fewer, larger communities. Instead of maintaining all services, it is more realistic to maintain only those that are priorized, whether it be a community centre or the grain elevator.*
>
> *[The challenge is] facing reality – every little town isn't going to make it. Local governments aren't co-operating.*
>
> *Communities may have to combine services, but a planned effort must be made to give everyone a sense of belonging.*

Everyone knows rural Saskatchewan is losing people, and only a few of the rural leaders consulted by SCRAD held out hope that the rural population could actually increase again. Some respondents noted that "modern transportation and communication means larger cities do not need to grow at the expense of smaller cities," and that new communication technology and knowledge-based employment "may reduce the necessity of living in big cities." Only one took note of the "growing trend in other areas of urban shift to rural areas," and suggested we recognize this continental trend and "determine ways to ensure that happens in Saskatchewan."

Most, however, are concerned mainly with the immediate need to consolidate. It is "time to accept that population patterns are evolving," wrote one, "from many small communities to fewer, larger communities. Instead of maintaining all services, it is more realistic to maintain only those that are priorized." Others argued for "facing reality – every little town isn't going to make it."

The chief problem, if one accepts this view, is that "local governments aren't co-operating" in planning and managing the trend toward consolidation. "The challenge is to identify a level of consolidation that is workable and reasonable," wrote one person, "and then rural people will know over a longer term that their centres will continue. This will allow for some permanence in community relations." "The provision and maintenance of services, such as natural gas, power, roads, water and sewer, will be the biggest determining factor in the settlement pattern," suggested another. "Pick the centres that will survive," said another – "if possible. Small centres have been trying to be everything to everyone. It appears this era is over." "The desired mix of large and small cities, large and small towns should be allowed to evolve through appropriate incentives, local skill development, local autonomy and provision of the necessary programs and tools," said another organizational leader.

Again, respondents suggested that part of the answer lies in the realms of attitudes and ideas. "Better loyalties to community development and enterprises," suggested one, to make key communities remain or become viable. "Decentralize and educate," urged another. Others argued for "inter-community or inter-municipal co-operation" to create economic opportunities and services. Such co-operation, wrote one person, should be organized around "small city-centred regions ... as fully functional and integrated settlements." We must enlarge our concept of community, this suggests, and

think about integrated regional populations, not the populations of individual communities. To achieve this, said another survey response, might require "government support for designated, recognized [regional] centres."

A number expressed concern with having a good mix of age groups, particularly retaining young people and seniors who are now gravitating to certain larger centres.

There were few suggestions for how to retain more people actually on farms, though one respondent suggested we look more closely at "a co-operative farming model or more use of partnerships."

As in the other survey categories, then, Saskatchewan rural and provincial leaders who wrote about settlement patterns favoured a mix of consolidation to adapt to existing trends, and increased local control, planning, priorizing, co-operation and integration, to shape and master those trends.

Quality of Life

Most rural Saskatchewan residents are very happy to be where they are, doing what they enjoy doing, but they are looked down upon by many people. I wish there could be a better understanding by city folks and others that rural community living has its limitations, but that it's wholesome and enjoyable. I guess we need to portray an image that we are just as well off and enjoying life to its fullest.

> *No question – [the biggest challenge is] our environment! We have some big problems to face, and we have been skirting these questions. Chemical use in farming, food additives and preservatives, numerous health problems – let alone the problem of pollution, these are the major challenges to be dealt with.*

Comments about rural quality of life ran the gamut from those who thought the quality of life was an advantage and those who thought it was a problem. Several said rural people should emphasize that rural communities "are good places in which to raise a young family." Others identified the reasons for this as being "closeness of neighbours," support mechanisms, the "wealth of grassroots knowledge and local history which provide strength to a community," and the slower and less hectic lifestyle. "A sense of belonging," one called the distinctiveness of rural Saskatchewan, while another described it as "a sense of permanence." But while some cited, for example, "a lower rate of violent crime" as an advantage of rural life, others said factors like isolation, stress, and lack of supports to deal with violence were part of the problem.

Those who were worried about rural quality of life mostly talked about isolation, poor social services and supports, and most frequently, the environment. "Young farmers should love farm landscaping and be especially aware of how indiscriminate use of chemicals will destroy our environment.... We are now drinking 2,4-D" because of runoff from summerfallow.

Many seemed to agree that the environment was of particular importance to rural life, forming an essential part of rural values and culture. Many linked this to other rural values, the peacefulness and support and caring that they associated with rural Saskatchewan. When talking about the ideal future for rural Saskatchewan, one respondent hoped for "a clean safe environment where people of all ages with all types of afflictions (e.g. mentally handicapped) can live independently in their own communities."

One respondent suggested that to help rural communities we should put the "emphasis on a stable farm population and a qualitative responsibility to land use instead of strip-mine farming." Such an ethic of land use would produce a "cohesiveness similar to that provided on an ethnic or religious base." Perhaps responsibility to the environment can be a tie binding together rural communities, attracting people, and keeping them. In any case, there seemed to be some consensus that rural Saskatchewan must do a better job of reinforcing the strengths of its quality of life, publicizing that quality, and marketing rural Saskatchewan as a place to live and work.

According to one, the key issue again was "having good co-operation among small towns, municipalities and rural areas to provide a good safe environment with lots of things to do that appeal to adults and children. Everyone likes to be proud of where they live. With some help from government (provincial and federal) rural Saskatchewan could be such a place."

Conclusion and Summation

> *Saskatchewan people, for the most part being individualists, prize their ability to "move, stretch" without having obstacles forever in the way, as other areas have.*
>
> *People ... will do as they see fit, not be told what is right.*
>
> *[We need] less of a "me" generation – more caring and sharing. Family and time for the family are important.*

There was one single overriding theme that came from SCRAD's respondents, in every category: the need to think larger than the individual or the single small town, to have communities and municipalities co-operate with one another and act as regions in order to share services, pursue innovative approaches and gain more control of development. The most important recommendation made by any respondent may be to "educate locals that our community includes a 50-kilometre-plus radius."

Within this enlarged community there has to be greater loyalty and a greater sense of togetherness. "Make some sacrifices by supporting all local groups," urged one of our respondents. "Small communities will continue to decline if quality of life is not considered as important as economic growth."

Sacrifices will have to be made, many of our respondents emphasized, in order to have planned and integrated development within rural regions.

One called for "a comprehensive development plan" for the rural areas, "a blueprint for the future." "I strongly agree that rural residents must participate.... SCRAD is to be commended for sending out this survey." Many respondents stressed that "decision making such as local environmental, community development and many other [decisions] must ... be made locally by the people who are directly affected." This was a second theme: rural residents must gain greater control of what is happening to them.

"Increased adult education opportunities, community forums and co-operative structures are some of the tools needed to mobilize our natural desire to work together for the benefit of all," suggested one respondent as a way to turn control back to rural people.

Another two themes that straddled several areas of discussion were the need to provide better and more integrated services for seniors so that they could remain at home and in their own communities, and to attract more professionals and young families to settle in smaller centres. One challenge here is the need to make it feasible for professionals to service the smaller centres, which may mean satellite offices, once-a-week visits, teams of health care professionals rotating among rural hospitals, or similar arrangements. But being on call twenty-four hours every day of the year, or living in a community that is distant from essential services, is not attractive to the typical Saskatchewan doctor or lawyer. A second aspect is the need to provide the services and community support that would make a rural lifestyle attractive to city-trained professionals, and to market and publicize these advantages. Again, the solutions seem to be on a regional and co-operative level, and part of the solution seems to be to market rural Saskatchewan more effectively as a positive place to live.

In these areas as in every other aspect of social change, the challenge is to change attitudes – to change how we think. SCRAD's respondents called above all else for greater co-operation, loyalty, and working together among rural residents and communities. But many would characterize our prevailing culture (urban but also rural) as an individualistic one, a consumerist and materialist one, which says that each person should seek their own material "best" – and we define that material best in terms of what is available in the cities. The cities had superior services and products even in the 1920s and 1930s and 1940s, when people by and large stayed home on the farm and in small town Saskatchewan. They stayed home not because rural Saskatchewan had the best stores or hospitals, not because people there were rich, but because they valued a sense of purpose and continuity and community that was uniquely found in the rural areas. The challenge that faces rural Saskatchewan today is not just to find and retain money, but to redefine and rediscover values and community, confidence and purpose.

To discover such values and such confidence, we will need a vision, and we will need to make choices. In this paper, you have heard the ideas of dozens of rural leaders about what that vision should be, what the important challenges are, and what some of the choices may be. From here on, it is up to you and to people like you in your communities.

Appendix 3
Phase 2: The Vision Conference

A Vision for Rural and Small Town Saskatchewan

Summary prepared for SCRAD by Dr. Brett Fairbairn,
University of Saskatchewan

Rural Saskatchewan of the future features a high quality of life in a healthy environment, emphasizing a sense of community and positive values. It has an agricultural base of sustainable, farmer-owned farms integrated with communities that serve a radius of approximately 30-45 minutes' drive, depending on the region. These communities offer opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. These communities provide at least Kindergarten to grade XII education of excellent quality, as well as a high standard of emergency and clinical health care. Recreational, cultural, and essential (day to day) commercial services are also available in these communities. Rural residents control the development of their communities through voluntary participation with adult education and training. A high standard of living, a rich social environment, and real economic opportunities encourage rural people to stay and contribute to their communities, and attract others to move into rural Saskatchewan.

The rural Saskatchewan of the future is centred on *people*. People are the purpose and the essence of rural Saskatchewan, and development is controlled by them, focused on them. Development fulfills their full needs as human beings, including but not limited to economic needs. There is recognition that our greatest untapped resource is our human resources, and to tap that resource requires creativity, education, and changes in thinking. Training unlocks people's skills; discussion unlocks their ideas. Local control allows people to shape the kind of rural Saskatchewan that they want. Communities are empowered to take the long-term view, to follow the values and hopes that make rural Saskatchewan distinctive. Also, we are inclusive. People — all kinds of people, all ages, both sexes, all races, the disabled — *belong* in rural Saskatchewan.

In the rural Saskatchewan of the future, population is stable. There is transition from generation to generation, new young farmers, and new opportunities in towns — jobs, recreation, sports, culture — for young people. There is effective transmission of values, so young people understand what is special about rural Saskatchewan, and believe in it, and can take on committed leadership and citizenship roles in their turn.

In the future, people stay in rural Saskatchewan because there is economic opportunity: sustainable and viable and well-financed family farms, and also diversified employment and entrepreneurship. Rural people are educated and well trained. Rural businesses are well-informed and responsive to regional and national and international markets. Rural people take risks, invest, and market their skills and ideas. They are creative and make use of their innate resources and of the advantages of rural Saskatchewan in recreation, heritage, image, and attitude. And rural people support their communities in their saving and spending, as part of a sense of commitment and loyalty.

Co-operation, regionalization and integration are the building blocks of rural development. Communities work together, see neighbors as partners rather than rivals; they share some things they used to consider their own, for, if they do not share, the facility, the service, the club they cherish may disappear altogether. With an enlarged sense of local community, by expanding its boundaries and drawing on all the people within those boundaries, we have complete and viable communities to serve all our needs.

An enhanced environment is an essential part of the rural Saskatchewan of the future — we work not only to preserve it, but also to enhance it. Trees, reforestation, lushness, variety, greenery, abundant water — all that is a key part of the vision of rural Saskatchewan's future. The land, the green and lush land, is a value and a principle of itself. We preserve it as the basis of future prosperity and a wholesome lifestyle, and use it to attract people, to give a positive image to rural Saskatchewan. It is not just a question of the physical environment, but also the social environment — the social and physical environments are rich and diverse and in harmony.

A positive image is absolutely fundamental. Rural people recognize the importance of self-esteem, self-confidence, realizing their potential, seeing their strengths and their position in the world. Farmers do not apologize for being farmers and living in rural Saskatchewan and are *proud*. This pride is not blind, nor resists change for the sake of resisting change, but is based on a true appreciation of the values of community, environment, and spirituality that are at the root of rural Saskatchewan.

Solutions from within. People. Local control and participation. Co-operation. Pride, and loyalty, connectedness, belonging, and the environment. These are the themes in the vision for rural Saskatchewan. Does rural Saskatchewan *want* to be saved? Do we have the *will* to change? Can communities really co-operate? Now is the time to act.

Our communities may change in many ways, but we must choose the kind of future that brings these values to life in new forms.

Appendix 4
Phases 2-4: Vision Statements on Major Areas of Concern

Healthy Rural Environment

Our vision of the ideal rural environment of the Saskatchewan of the future is one where:

- Improved management and utilization of resources is based on affordable and environmentally sound technology;
- Adequate quantity and quality of water for domestic, recreational, and industrial use is secured for future generations;
- Enhanced renewable resources such as lands, habitat, forests, and wildlife are used in a sustainable manner;
- Non-renewable resources, such as fossil fuels and minerals, are responsibly used (according to the 4 Rs – reduce, re-use, recycle, repair) to eliminate adverse environmental impacts;
- Resources are managed so that waste is minimized and, where possible, waste products, such as paper and plastic, are recycled and reused;
- Hazardous products and by-products, such as spent nuclear fuel, herbicides, pesticides and pharmaceuticals, are managed and controlled in such a way that does not threaten the environment.

Financing and Re-financing Farms

This is our vision for financing and refinancing farms in the future:

- The farm business provides a stable income that covers the cost of production and provide an adequate family income based on good management.
- A long term strategy for financial programs and policies ensures a stable economic environment for the family farm.
- Education in business principles, financial planning and agriculture in other parts of the world ensures that family farm management teams are in a better position to make decisions.
- A long-term strategy provides for inter-generational transfer of farm assets that will not create hardships for either generation.

Human and Social Services

This is our vision human and social services in the Saskatchewan of the future:

- People are the central focus and concern of all activities and decisions. People are not a "resource" or a "'commodity" to be used for some other purpose or function. People are the reason for resource development in rural Saskatchewan.
- A sufficient population supports all the institutions necessary to maintain a high quality of life for everyone wishing to live in rural areas.
- The primary institution which supports the development of people is the family. This "intimate network" lays the foundations for individual self-worth, personal growth, and self-fulfillment. Human services (and all other services and institutions) support the development and growth of people by supporting viable and sustainable families.
- The next level of "intimate network" is the community. Viable communities meet most of the basic needs of individuals and families. These communities foster the values of freedom, interdependence, individual worth, service and self-fulfillment. Communities recognize and embrace diversity and recognize that differences foster the creativity needed to solve problems created by rapid change.
- Each community has the ability and resources to design and deliver a network of human services which meets the specific needs of individuals and families within the community. Because each community has a particular set of problems and a unique mix of people, each community will have its own unique approach to the mix, emphasis, and delivery of human services.
- Our rural communities also have the capacity to mold and focus all other services (e.g. health, education, recreation, economic, transportation) so they complement and support the development and growth of individuals and families.
- To maintain a level of equity among all our communities in their ability to meet individual and family needs, the province has established standards for human services. The Province also provides long-term funding mechanisms for all human services that meet the required standards.
- The rural Saskatchewan of the future has a rich network of human and other services including, depending on the needs of the area, a network of support services for families- mutual sharing opportunities, with back-up professional counseling services, a network of child care centres, support services for the mentally and emotionally handicapped, rural resources for battered women and children and enhanced home care services.

Developing and Marketing Saskatchewan Products

This is our vision for developing and marketing Saskatchewan products in the future:

Our ideal for rural communities is many small enterprises, each employing a few people, rather than one large employer. Our priorities are upgrading existing or developing new a) agricultural products, and b) non-agricultural products.

- Our products are produced and sold without subsidies in a free and unsubsidized world market.
- We have special, mutually beneficial trade relationships with other countries.
- Our products are differentiated from general commodity markets by their quality, consistency, and special features developed through consumer research.
- Product development is based on meeting international consumer needs in areas where we have a natural competitive advantage.
- Product development is based on exploiting specialty market segments such as organic produce, range fed beef, ethnic foods, specialty game production.
- Products are developed that are in tune with the growing trends in our society, i.e., a clean environment, health care, fitness and recreation. These are mainly specialty or higher value products and can therefore be economically shipped to larger market areas, particularly California.
- Product development will encourage and complement the diversification of agriculture, i.e., specialty crops.
- Product development will utilize current waste material from our agriculture, forestry and mining industries.
- In such areas as freight rates, tariffs and duties legislation and regulations are removed or enacted to encourage the development or upgrading of Saskatchewan products.
- Where possible and appropriate all Saskatchewan products are sold under the theme of clear skies, clean air, pure water. The name Saskatchewan should become synonymous with clean, safe and pure.
- The private and co-operative sector are encouraged with appropriate support.

Small and Local Business

(Combined results of the workshops on Financing Small Business and Developing Local Enterprise)

Our vision for local and small business in the rural Saskatchewan of the future is one where:

- There is local input, involvement, support, and commitment to community economic development .
- There is a planned and coordinated approach to local and regional development based on viable, sustainable enterprises.
- Communities are able to raise investment and loan funds to contribute to local economic development and diversification.
- Government, at all levels, provide a coordinated and supportive role to entrepreneurs and small business.

Sustainable Agriculture

This is our vision for sustainable agriculture in the future of Saskatchewan:

- Rural Saskatchewan is based on an integrated systems of farm and community resources which allows specialization within a diverse region while ensuring viable communities.
- Economic reward systems which are supportive of the goals of socially economically and environmentally sustainable activities in rural areas are in place.
- The regeneration of healthy natural environments is achieved through sensitive production processes and enlightened land use, from intensive agriculture through to wildlife habitats.
- A sustainable agriculture imposes on itself increasingly more chemical-free systems which prove to have a strong export advantage in the world market.
- There is an sustainable agriculture information center, based at the University of Saskatchewan, with all the modern gadgetry.

Developing Tourism Opportunities

Our vision for tourism in the rural Saskatchewan of the future is one where:

- Tourism in Saskatchewan contributes significantly to the economy, but is respectful of the environment and enhances the quality life of Saskatchewan's citizens.
- There is co-operation, communication and education, all contributing to positive attitudes and recognition of the tourism potential of rural and urban attractions.
- Marketing and promotion is actively pursued at local, national and international levels, in co-operation with other regions and agencies.
- To increase tourism potential, communities take advantage of existing organizations and government programs to train people and improve their attractions.
- Communities pursue ongoing evaluation and analysis of programs and goals and adapt their plans of action when warranted.

Volunteer and Volunteer Organizations

This is our vision for volunteer organizations and volunteers in the rural Saskatchewan of the future:

- Volunteers are recognized as a valued part of rural community life.
- Volunteerism in rural Saskatchewan enhances community livability by actively involving all segments of the population in community affairs.
- Volunteers are coordinated locally using existing resources.
- Training and development of volunteers are available in the community.
- Leadership and volunteer training resources provided by provincial sources support these local efforts.

Local Job Creation

This vision statement describes the desired conditions to provide for creative and innovative employment opportunities and training. This will help to ensure a viable and economically sound rural and small urban Saskatchewan.

- Human resources development for youth in particular is centred on the opportunities provided by our land base.
- Ongoing education and training of the rural work force enhances development opportunities that sustains economic independence.
- Industry is decentralized and diversified to secure a strong rural economic base that provides ongoing employment.
- Planning and research focusing on integrating farming and other industry maximizes the social and economic viability of rural Saskatchewan.

Community-based Enterprises

This is our vision for Community-based Enterprises for rural Saskatchewan of the future:

- Local and regional community-based funds are pooled from local residents for investment in local enterprises.
- The availability of goods and services within a region are enhanced through inter-community co-operation of business and local government. This maximizes capital and human resources and helps to identify and facilitate the establishment of innovative viable enterprises to meet local needs.
- Communities have value-added processing and a broad range of services that enhance their economic stability and quality of life within a clean, safe environment.

A Revitalized Rural Church

Our Vision Statement for the future (1990s and beyond) explains our values and ideals for a healthy, active and responsible rural and small urban Saskatchewan Church.

- The rural church is dependent on partner churches to share a common goal – namely, that we are partners in a shared ministry/mission.
- The rural church partners trust each other, share the common belief in the "priesthood of all believers", are inclusive and foster the important assumption that "people" are the church and not the "building."
- The rural church is motivated by a co-operative vision fostered by an acceptance of all partners having much to contribute to our shared ministry/mission.
- The rural church is more Christian than denominational and this focus should be evident with an Ecumenical Rural Mission Committee, comprised of denominational representation that is broadly based.
- The rural church is diligent in the wise use of resources at its disposal (money, people, media, electronics) as co-operative ministries and missions are collectively developed.
- The rural church acknowledges that the building of relationships suits our Christian Mandate and that care, concern, healing and reconciliation are the primary priorities of effort.
- The rural church works with other segments of the community as a worthwhile partner for the benefit of all the community.
- The rural church views change as necessary, challenging and opportunities for advancement of Christian goals; therefore change is acknowledged as worthwhile for the continued "revitalization of the church."

Health Services

This is our vision for the delivery of health care services in the rural Saskatchewan of the future:

- Regional "one stop – one entry" health care centres integrate long-term care, acute care, home care, as well as out-patient, pharmaceutical and ambulance services, enriched and community housing and other health related services.
- One central health care board comprised of local elected community representatives administers each respective health care centre.
- The principle of "universal access" to health care services is recognized and is functioning effectively.
- Nurses are the primary health care givers. They possess an expanded knowledge based and have ongoing access to upgrading programs.
- Local health care centres are used to provide post-operative care.
- "Wellness Clinics" play an important role in preventive health care and promotion of a healthy life style.
- Based on the needs of rural residents, the health care system is "consumer driven".
- Each health care centre specialized in the delivery of specified services helping to avoid duplication of services and equipment.
- Computer links with a data base of patient information and specialists facilitate more efficient use of rural services.
- An expanded health card is used globally to monitor not only prescription drugs, but doctor's visits, hospital access and other health care services. It also provides access to personal medical information.
- A joint Department of Health, Housing, Continuing Care and Social Services coordinates the effective delivery of community-based health care programs.
- Volunteers are promoted, encouraged and recognized and have input into the decision-making process.
- Health care centres are environmentally conscious and actively practice and promote environmental safety.

Arts, Culture and Recreation

Our vision describes a vibrant cultural and recreational community:

- Employment opportunities are available in the arts. Visual artists, performers, writers and filmmakers are able to practice and make a living from their work in Saskatchewan and beyond, and be credible in the eyes of the people of Saskatchewan, without having to leave the province.
- Cultural and recreational opportunities are available to people of all age groups, from cradle to grave. These will include formal and informal, credit and non-credit education opportunities. Centralized and distance education will make it possible for everyone to learn new skills without having to leave their own communities.
- Saskatchewan communities are vibrant and alive with community centres and support for peoples' extra-curricular interests.
- Saskatchewan people appreciate, preserve and enhance their cultural and natural environments.
- The quality of life is maintained and improved with many opportunities for all residents in arts, culture and recreation. Providers of services are innovative about sharing personnel with neighbouring communities.
- Community cultural and recreational centres are the meeting place for all residents of the community.
- Municipal authorities see arts, culture and recreation as essential to community well-being – in terms of quality of life and positive economic impact – and support them appropriately.
- Everyone has the opportunity to get involved in decision-making regarding arts, culture and recreation opportunities and facilities and structures exist to implement those decisions.

Education Services

Our vision for rural education is characterized by the following statements:

- Communities are broadly supportive of education and co-operate to rationalize education delivery in rural Saskatchewan.
- Education delivery is integrated an amalgamated at the regional and local level bringing together early childhood, elementary, secondary and post-secondary programming.
- The programs are flexibly designed and adapted to meet the different and changing needs of learners of all ages and abilities and cultural, social and economic backgrounds.
- Parents, learners and community members are integrally involved in local planning and decision-making.
- Education is regarded as a resource as it contributes to local leadership development, enhances rural community life and fosters lifelong learning.
- A wide range of high quality post-secondary programming is easily accessible in rural Saskatchewan.
- Education is viewed as an investment in the economic and social development of the province and a range of financial resources is drawn upon to support it.
- Programming focuses on development of the individual. Characteristics to strive toward are creativity, self-esteem, independence, critical thinking, communications and social and work skills.
- Self-directed learning is an objective of education. Educators enhance learning by supporting student independence, adapting instruction, and facilitating access to a wide range of resources and experiences.
- Administrators provide leadership through planning and managing change.
- Increasingly other human services are coordinated or integrated at the regional and local levels with and through educational delivery sites.

Appendix 5
Phase 4: The Action Conference

A Time to Act: The Dialogue Since December

Statement prepared for SCRAD by Dr. Brett Fairbairn,
University of Saskatchewan

What We Said in December

We finished the last conference like this one with a number of themes on our minds. After "visioning" our future, after discussing what is possible and what is desirable for rural Saskatchewan, we came up with many principles and many good ideas in sixteen workshop reports. Now, at this conference, it is time to go a step further, to begin to identify which issues are the key ones, to begin to set priorities, to begin to develop an action plan that will say who will be responsible for what goals.

Perhaps it is a good idea to start by reviewing the kind of future we looked ahead to in December.

First, it will be a future centred on people. Our greatest untapped resource is our human resources, and to tap that resource requires creativity, education, and changes in thinking. Train people and unlock their skills; engage them in discussion and unlock their ideas. Give people local control to shape the kind of rural Saskatchewan that they want. Empower them to act as communities, to take the long-term view, to follow the values and hopes that make rural Saskatchewan distinctive. Also, we must be inclusive. People – all kinds of people, all ages, both sexes, all races, the disabled – must belong in rural Saskatchewan.

To accomplish rural development goals, many workshops in December talked about co-operation, regionalization, and integration. Communities must work together, see neighbors as partners rather than rivals; they must share some things they used to take for granted as their own, for, if they do not share, the facility, the service, the club they cherish may disappear altogether from all the communities in the region. If everyone tries to have everything, then everyone may end up with nothing. We know we can co-operate if we have to – but we still shrink back and question whether the will is there.

The environment came out again and again – not just to preserve it in its present state, but to enhance it. Trees, reforestation, lushness, greenery, abundant water – all that is almost as much a part of our vision of rural

Saskatchewan as is our view of people. The land, the green and lush land, is a value and a principle in and of itself. We must preserve it as the basis of future prosperity and a wholesome lifestyle, and use it to attract people, to give a positive image to rural Saskatchewan.

That positive image is absolutely fundamental. The workshop reports in December talked about self-esteem, self-confidence, realizing our potential, seeing our strengths and our position in the world. Thinking globally and seeing ourselves and our identity in that global view. As one person put it, "it's time we stopped apologizing for being farmers and living in rural Saskatchewan.... We should be proud."

Solutions from within. People. Local control and participation. Co-operation. Pride, and loyalty, connectedness, belonging, and the environment. Those are the themes in the vision that we started to develop in December. Does rural Saskatchewan want to be saved? Do we have the will to change? Can communities really co-operate? Now is the time to act.

Creating Our Future: The Dialogue Since December

Since last December, the process you are engaged in has moved forward. On 22 February a broadcast was made on the SCN network to help local discussion groups carry on the debate about the future of rural Saskatchewan. In the last month, those discussion groups, as well as individuals and groups from across Saskatchewan, have been sending in questionnaire responses about what they see as the important elements of a vision and an action plan for rural Saskatchewan. The questionnaire they have been answering posed five questions:

1. What are the five most important **external** factors you feel will influence the future of rural Saskatchewan?

2. What are the five most important **internal** factors you feel will influence the future of rural Saskatchewan?

3. Thinking in terms of what we want to preserve, achieve, avoid, expand, improve, or do better, how would you describe your preferred future for rural Saskatchewan?

4. How might Saskatchewan citizens, organizations, communities most effectively contribute to the attainment of your vision(s)?

These questions challenged the respondents to identify what factors were working against rural Saskatchewan and what ones were in its favour, to contrast this with the future they want to see, and to describe what people like themselves might do to help bring that future about. These are challenging questions, and since they were open-ended (no prompts or multiple choice) they provoked a great variety of answers.

Responses were received from 21 groups, including local discussion groups as well as members or staff of various organizations and businesses, from 23 sites

that took part in the February SCAN broadcast, from 4 high school classes (over 100 students), and from 36 other individuals. A rough summary of the responses is attached.

Perhaps the most surprising result in these findings is that "education" was the most frequently mentioned need. Education, by which respondents meant formal schooling, post-secondary education, as well as informal education and discussion, was the top-listed internal factor in shaping rural Saskatchewan's future (question two). When respondents went on to picture their preferred futures for rural Saskatchewan, education ranked among the top elements of their visions (question three). Pretty well as many people volunteered that they were concerned with education as said they were concerned with saving family farms. And when respondents were asked to identify what Saskatchewan people could do about the challenges they face, education was again one of the two most frequently mentioned solutions (question four).

In a way, this strong belief in education is an expression of faith in Saskatchewan people to solve their own problems, no matter how large, provided only that they are given the opportunity to develop their skills and ideas. Belief in education is also an expression of belief in small-scale solutions at the level of direct action by ordinary people, solutions that involve people learning to work together and sharing new ideas. Perhaps belief in this kind of solution also expresses a lack of confidence in government or established businesses or established institutions of any kind, on their own, to come up with complete solutions to the kind of problems rural Saskatchewan faces. In a world where problems are large and solutions uncertain, where no one solution may work for all cases and all people, education is what helps people find their own answers to their own problems. It is the one thing individuals can take with them no matter what they decide to do.

The environment came up as an important topic under every single question. The concern with the environment is particularly noticeable among the high school respondents. A number of the high school students answered all four questions solely in light of environmental considerations – every answer these students gave was about an environmental problem or an environmental solution. Given that the environment is such a large topic, it is remarkable that respondents showed great confidence in what individual and community action could do to solve environmental questions, whether by avoiding damaging products and chemicals, or by community action to clean up problems and plant trees. For many respondents, the environment seems to be an issue where a large, diffuse problem has already been connected with identifiable, concrete responses at the level of personal and community behaviour. Perhaps this relationship between a big problem and many small, specific solutions should be a model for addressing other large challenges.

Not surprisingly, farming and jobs emerge as other important themes in the questionnaire responses. We look ahead to a stabilized farming industry in which family farms are viable, where prices are high enough and debt is low enough for farmers to survive and for young farmers to make a go of things. But when it comes to question four, what Saskatchewan people can do about this vision for the future, there is almost total silence on agriculture. We are

concerned about agriculture, but it may not be a field where quick action is possible. Employment, diversification, value-added processing, tourism, small business, and jobs in small communities are another important category in the responses. Here there seems to be more hope that, by working together and co-operating, we can make some real progress. Survey respondents seemed to have a somewhat clearer idea of what kind of structures and what kind of policies could bring these results about.

Other frequent survey responses concerned matters like depopulation and the need to retain more young people; preserving or improving health services; and preserving postal and elevator services. Perhaps all of these varied responses could be considered as aspects of "community stability." We want communities that last, that have focal points, that have the essential local services, and that keep their young people.

Having mentioned these broad patterns, we should also go through the questions in order.

Question one, about external factors affecting Saskatchewan, provoked a lot of responses about trade wars, grain prices, commodity markets, the environment, weather, and global trends of various kinds, as well as comments on federal government policies. Clearly national and global trends, the physical and economic and social and political environments, are important considerations in Saskatchewan's future – which is not to say we must bow to these factors, but rather, that if we do not want to bow to them, we must clearly understand what we are doing and act to assert a different view of the future.

The second question, about internal factors, produced a lot of mention of areas like education, attitudes, economic development, health services, agriculture, and various social challenges and government policies. While there is no clear consensus to be found here about one or two internal factors that will be decisive, the replies make interesting reading and provide a good sense of where we are at, and what challenges we face. Among the high school students, the concern with jobs and minimum wage levels is particularly noticeable, as well as their consistent concern with the environment.

The ideas from section three of the questionnaire are especially important to the task of the present conference, since the goals identified in question three can become the basis of an action plan. When asked about the kind of future we would prefer (question three), patterns do emerge in the questionnaire responses: education, family farms, clean environment, stable communities, prosperous and diversified towns, development of recreational and cultural facilities. These goals suggest a form of development that is not only economic, but also rounds out rural communities with fully developed recreational, cultural, associational, and personal life – whole communities to serve whole people, to encourage them to stay and shop and invest and build.

On the one hand this suggests a wholesome, stable community, one with values and social interaction to tie it together. On the other hand, this also seems to be a vision of a community that offers opportunity to its members –

opportunity to develop themselves through education, to make a living in farming or to find a job, opportunity for leisure and entertainment. This combination of stability and opportunity means communities that remain whole and young people who stay.

There is even more consensus, in a general way, about what to do to achieve this vision. In responses to question four, all the vast problems of agriculture and global considerations and government seem to fall into the background. One person after another wrote instead about education, developing skills and ideas, participating, learning to work together and make compromises, transforming attitudes to embrace change and to be proud and positive about rural Saskatchewan. Many respondents questioned why our communities could not co-operate better, not only within themselves but also one community with neighboring communities. To co-operate more effectively is a question of attitude – making compromises, changing our sense of what our local "community" is and will be – but it is also a very practical question, of volunteering to do work and form joint committees and organizations and put up common buildings and facilities.

And with that, the stage is definitely set for an action plan – or rather, a number of them in different areas. Which challenges are the priorities? What are the best ways to go about resolving them? What principles are to be followed, or what approaches can be recommended? And who should take responsibility for the next steps? We are starting to interest a lot of people and to mobilize a lot of people's thought and ideas. Let us move forward together once again.

Appendix 6
Phase 4-6: Planning Action

THE ACTIONS TO ATTAIN THE VISION

The following lists the "actions" proposed by participants in Phases 4 and 5. The list does not reflect the number of times any given action idea was repeated.

The list has been set up to allow your community organization or group to identify which actions might be appropriate to your community. Identifying possible actions is the first step to planning their implementation.

As your organization or group moves through the list, discuss the action ideas. The listed actions may prompt new ideas that are more appropriate to your community.

Action for our organization/ community

Priority Level

High 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 Low

AGRICULTURE

Actions to be taken might include

Education and Public Relations:

- promote the positive aspects of agriculture to the community and to the younger generation
- implement a program of public education on the importance of agriculture to society, especially the costs and benefits of farming. More local vacation farms should be developed to help in the education of urban people
- encourage farm management clubs, and farmers to participate in more farm management seminars
- promote business management education in schools
- encourage and develop local leadership

Organization:

- increase vertical integration, at the national level, to keep more products, more jobs and revenues at home
- establish local agriculture production groups
- encourage farms to form small groups to jointly own and share the co-operative use of farm equipment

	1	2	3	4	
Farm Economic Viability:					
- work toward short and long term strategies to ensure family farm viability					
- encourage the manufacture of more energy efficient farm machinery					
- encourage the cooperative use of farm machinery					
- reduce specific and selected input costs such as fuel taxes					
- promote the installation of solar collectors to heat farm buildings					
- create a long-term viable safety network for farmers					
- encourage mixed farming and diversification practices					
Policy and Lobbying:					
- make it possible for smaller farms to remain viable					
- improve intergenerational land transfer options, including such programs as S.P.P.s and R.R.S.P.s, and vender financing options that allow longer term transfers,e.g. ten years					
- develop a retirement program or farmers					
- introduce fair commodity prices					
reduce/eliminate the farm debt load					
- develop a rationalized system for farm product distribution					
- require a farm management certificate prior to granting a Canadian Wheat Board permit book					
- establish, in cooperation with farmers, a contemporary, systematic and continuous upgrading program for them					
- ensure a reasonable return for farm products					
- ensure reasonable alternatives to off-farm employment trends					
- encourage the Farm Credit Corporation to take a more pro-active approach					
- encourage the collaboration of food producers and local business to provide "unpackaged" food options					
SMALL BUSINESS					
Actions to be taken might include:					
Education and Technical Assistance:					
- encourage business awareness and entrepreneurial education in schools					
- encourage local schools to teach general business skills					
- organize business people, perhaps by forming a group of local "entrepreneurial educators" made up of experienced business people, to co-operate in delivering business education in the schools and community and providing insight into business/job creation in the home area					
- promote the Junior Achievement Program in the community					

	1	2	3	4
- help potential entrepreneurs learn about possible technical and financial assistance that will help them get started and/or improve their businesses.				
Local Planning				
- undertake a study of trading patterns with the active participation of community consumers				
- make an inventory of existing business and of purchases made outside the community				
- determine the business policies that work effectively for similar communities				
- encourage local businesses to create an environment conducive to new business development				
- actively pursue local job creation; do not wait for government to take the initiative				
- actively and continuously promote a "shop at home" philosophy, and ensure that local products are worthy of purchase (high quality and competitive)				
- promote and support the decentralization (from larger urban centres) of businesses and services appropriate to small urban centres				
Business Infrastructure				
- establish a "local development board or council"				
- consider building a "mall" in a central location, to encourage new businesses and maintain a vital "downtown core" for the (business) community				
- lobby banks and governments to have a more lenient policy in lending money to meet the needs of rural areas				
- provide reasonable property and tax incentives to beginning and existing businesses				
- facilitate the sharing of resources used by industries in the region				
- explore all possible ways of providing child care in order to release all available skills in the community for support in local business				
- encourage or demand that local government assist and support small business initiatives, such as keeping business taxes at reasonable levels				
- foster organizations and means for co-operative efforts between communities and regions				
Business Enterprise				
- promote, through local and regional initiatives, the development of creative, locally-based enterprises, such as ethanol plants				

	1	2	3	4
DIVERSIFICATION Actions to be taken might include:				
Education and Public Relations:				
- promote the teaching of entrepreneurship and business education in elementary and high schools and through adult education programs				
- implement a Junior Achievement Program and integrate it with business education programs in schools				
- promote "agro-tourism" — farm orientation for urbanites				
- encourage schools and service industries to promote and present a positive community image				
- investigate and educate about the products needed (market gaps) in the province				
- lobby for official training courses for economic developers in the province				
- help develop a system for hospitality training for tourism, emphasizing that tourism booth workers should promote the entire region, not just one community				
- lobby the education system to move away from the "big business" model only				
Local Policy, Planning & Promotion:				
- make an inventory and priorize the existing service and needs of the community				
- encourage local people to support local initiatives				
- promote the development of local industries/businesses that complement the area's natural resources				
- investigate the value-added processing of raw products				
- investigate/promote industry based on environment-friendly technology				
- create community-based organizations with wide representation from the community				
- offer incentives to industry to locate in the area				
- promote home-grown attractions				
- take advantage of the Community Bond Program and other fund pooling methods, and use the funds to provide equity to attract industry				
- develop a quality community profile and distribute it with invitations to appropriate industries and businesses to locate in the area				
- develop unique heritage or other events in the community				
- promote home-grown attractions for tourism, including local artists; craftspersons, musicians, etc. and local athletes, or any other features that set your community apart				
- develop a hall of fame to recognize outstanding local talent				
- develop a list of recommendations to provincial government for the development of tourism and other sectors				

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- host a multi-community, multi-cultural festival				
- encourage flexibility in product marketing regulations				
- lobby to further develop the Hudson Bay Route to facilitate trade with Russia and Europe				
Infrastructure:				
- establish appropriate community-based local organizations to promote business development and entrepreneurship; tourism committee, regional tourism board/council, community development committee, community economic development committee, agricultural diversification committee, community and rural development corporation and others				
- promote inter-community co-operation/multi-community collaboration in diversification efforts such as tourism				
- encourage at the provincial level the establishment of an entrepreneurial databank with grassroots input				
- promote the Saskatchewan Research Council services to small manufacturers				
- work with appropriate agencies to develop a "promotion caravan" which would travel promoting Saskatchewan products, such as vegetables, laundry services, hockey sticks, perogies, etc.				
- set up regional trading houses to test and market products from the region				
- use the media to promote a positive image of the community				
- consider longer shopping hours for communities that have the potential of attracting tourists, including U.S. citizens				
- generate a tourism map for the entire region and province				
- approach new and potential markets and entrepreneurs				
- examine the effect of the tax structure on tourism				
- provide adequate new facilities and accommodation to encourage new enterprise development, recognizing that funding for building is a frequent barrier to development				
- work on the establishment of a marketing information system for cottage industries and others				
- develop funding options to enable young people to travel and research diversification possibilities				
Enterprises:				
- develop greenhouses to grow locally produced vegetables				
- develop a regional seed cleaning and treating facility				
- develop a business to provide sanitary supplies to local schools, hospitals, nursing homes, etc.				
- initiate enterprises in tourism taking advantage of the community's and region's existing features and attractions, supported by enterprises such as vacation farms, bed and breakfasts, museums, etc.				

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- investigate and take advantage of recycling opportunities, e.g. recycling depots				
- investigate/consider small woodlots				
- promote fish farming and processing				
EDUCATION				
Actions to be taken might include:				
Teaching:				
- encourage teachers to take regular refresher courses				
- promote more educational opportunities in all walks of life, including farming, ranching and small business				
Curriculum:				
- integrate agriculture into the education system				
- promote/develop adult education and training for business education, farm business, farm mechanics, trades, high school upgrading, and for citizenship training and individual self-fulfillment				
Program Delivery:				
- Take advantage of existing electronic technology for educational and cultural services; extend the satellite education system				
- use the Agriculture Canada Experimental Stations and other sources to train first year agriculture students through Regional Colleges				
- take advantage of Regional Colleges for volunteer training				
- promote implementation of distance education to deliver existing educational content				
- establish a central learning centre with resource people that community groups can use as they feel appropriate				
- promote the upgrading of university programs and courses available in rural areas				
ENVIRONMENT				
Actions to be taken might include:				
Education				
- implement environmental education in schools which values conservation and application in Saskatchewan				
- establish a public education program, which would encourage efforts to preserve and enhance the environment and emphasize the 4 Rs - reduce, re-use, recycle, repair.				
- educate the public that there are present costs for future benefits, for example, garbage disposal vs. recycling				
- promote the education of farmers on sustainable farming				

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Funding				
- establish an environmental tax				
- establish an environmental lottery, with funds going to environmental projects				
Policy & Program				
- lobby for a review of forestry practices, including clear cutting and reforestation				
- promote the planting of small woodlots on non-arable land and along major waterways				
- promote a "Save Our Soils" program				
- establish water pumping programs to ensure the success of tree planting programs				
- establish mandatory recycling of those materials most appropriate, develop recycling plants and industries, and have communities co-operate to make garbage management affordable				
- promote wind and solar energy generation that could be sold into the power grid by farmers				
- encourage bulk purchase of food, oil and other appropriate products; lobby for reduced packaging				
HUMAN SERVICES				
Actions to be taken might include:				
Education:				
- lobby for a mandatory curriculum on wellness				
- arrange for training for local volunteers				
Policy and Program:				
a) Health Care				
- lobby for implementation of recommendations of Murray Report on health care				
- provide better access to emergency health service				
- regionalize health services				
- provide greater financial compensation for health care support staff				
- develop a helicopter ambulance service for remote areas				
- encourage school boards to implement meal programs to ensure nutrition for all children, while supporting agriculture through food consumption				
- promote internships by doctors, dentists, teachers, etc. in rural areas				
- integrate hospital and nursing home services				

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b) Education:					
- implement regional co-operation to ensure effective services					
c) Religion:					
- encourage churches in the community to co-operate with one another, especially through ecumenical/co-operative services and joint use of facilities — "people are more important than buildings"					
- re-emphasize church values					
d) Other:					
- develop counseling/support services for health, economic and social stress					
- provide social opportunities, for example, bingo, for senior citizens; develop services to keep seniors in the community					
- integrate community facilities					
- investigate options for providing child care (or support) for community volunteers					
GENERAL COMMUNITY					
Actions to be taken might include:					
Education:					
- arrange training sessions for community volunteers					
- promote an attitude of change about living in rural Saskatchewan					
- work to enhance and promote leadership skills within the community					
- use existing buildings in the community as education centres to include satellite technology, child care and community centre					
People Talents:					
- promote commitment to the community and rural area					
- make full use of abilities and talents of both senior citizens and youth, thus freeing up time for parents to spend with their children					
- work together regionally with people from other communities, rather than each community for itself					
- promote open memberships in community organizations to encourage newcomers to get involved in the community					
- work to minimize the divisions between the farms and the "in-town" folk					
- encourage involvement of women and youth in the planning and execution of a community development process					
- encourage the recognition and involvement of all ethnic groups					

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Policy and Program:				
- encourage people to expand their idea of community				
- establish a community development board				
- hold "town hall" or other community meetings to allow people to discuss their concerns and perceptions about the community				
- conduct a survey or community study to determine community needs, problems and opportunities				
- encourage community fund-raising				
- make community aware of existing problems, needs and opportunities				
- encourage more multi-sector committees and co-operation				
- develop a long term (5-10 year) plan for renewal, addressing economic, social, cultural, education and health concerns				
- prepare a community inventory of physical, human, tourism, education, health and natural and recreation resources				
- make more effective use of existing community facilities				
- lobby for maintenance of railways				
- lobby for maintenance of essential services in the areas — medical, postal, etc.				
- implement a community newsletter, perhaps jointly with the school				
- lobby to have government services decentralized into rural centres				
- provide incentives for new immigrants to move to the community				
- implement a community pride program including tree planting, building repair and business improvement				
- aim at a self-sustaining community development with a minimum of government support; hire resources only as necessary				
- lobby for a better coordination of government programs				
- implement local beautification programs				
- organize fundraising for development projects				
Multi-Community Co-operation/Collaboration				
- reduce competition between/among neighbouring communities				
- co-operate with neighbouring communities to determine the needs and goals of the region and develop a regional plan				
- rationalize services and facilities between/among neighbouring communities to make the them more economically feasible				
- establish regional boards in such areas as education, health and recreation				
- hold regional meetings to identify common concerns				

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- share professional expertise among several local communities, such as recreation directors and community development workers				
- lobby for the upgrading of roads to facilitate safer travel within the region				
- organize an inter-community bus service in the region				
- organize regional fire protection services				
- restructure R.M.s into larger trading or service areas				
- work toward the long term establishment of more community multi-purpose facilities				
- pursue joint projects with local reserves and indigenous communities				
- promote a sense of belonging to the region, not just the individual hamlet, village or town				
Marketing and Promotion:				
- promote the value of rural life				
- encourage a positive attitude toward the community and surrounding area				
- adopt a more responsible attitude toward the election of public officers				
- develop effective "community profiles" to promote the community's benefits				
- promote a broader definition of "community" and the special features and existing advantages that make the region unique				
- look for new and innovative ways of encouraging youth to stay in the community; recognizing that the old ways do not work anymore				
- explore alternatives to bring youth back to the community				
- develop "welcome wagon" type programs for newcomers				
- lobby and develop media coverage and promotions that portray a positive image of rural Saskatchewan				
- develop placemats of the community/region that would be supplied to local restaurants				
- accentuate the positive aspects of our community				
- provide a system of information exchange in the region: work with appropriate agencies to establish a community services and products advertising newspaper, like Auto Trader; organize a local radio station				
- promote improved networking systems between communities and governments				

Appendix 7
Phase 7: The Community Discussion Guides

Currently in production are a set of fifteen community discussion guides that evolved out of the sixteen workshop areas that were pursued throughout the course of the project. These discussion guides will not provide communities with ready-made answers to their problems; rather, they will lead community groups and organizations through the process of discussion pursued by the Project participants and thus provide a springboard for further discussion and action at the community level. When completed, the series of discussion guides will include:

- Community-based Enterprises
- Local Job Creation
- Saskatchewan Products
- Small and Local Business
- Farm Finance
- Education Services
- Human and Social Services
- Volunteers and Volunteer Organizations
- Culture, Arts and Recreation
- Rural Environment
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Health Services
- Tourism
- Rural Church

As well, there will be two special guides, one on Entrepreneurial Innovation and another on Visioning as a Community Development Approach.

Appendix 8
The Rural Futures Task Force

Linda Pipke:	Farmer and Program Coordinator, Carlton Trail Regional College, Davidson (Chairperson)
Cheryl Senecal:	Executive Secretary, Saskatchewan Women's Institutes
Harold Baker:	Professor of Extension, University of Saskatchewan (Project Coordinator)
Jim Conly:	Farmer and Board Member, Federated Co-operatives Ltd., Macklin
John Derbowka:	Supervisor, Saskatoon Office, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool
Wayne Katerynych:	Farmer and Representative, National Farmers Union, North Battleford
Lloyd Talbot:	Director, Community Planning Services Branch, Saskatchewan Rural Development
Margret Asmuss:	Administrative Assistant, Saskatchewan Rural Futures Project
Peter Krebs:	Administrative Assistant, SCRAD